



# Department Updates

June / July 2021

## Finance

### Jodi Busch Finance Director

The last few months have been like a whirlwind in the Finance Department. Some staff continue to work from home up to four days per week. This has proven to work well for our department and we have been able to function remotely without a loss of productivity.

CliftonLarsonAllen conducted their fieldwork partially onsite for three weeks through the end of April and first part of May. Over the past three years, we have been working to submit information electronically into a shared portal, so it is not as crucial that they are onsite every day for the fieldwork. It was nice to hear that we continue to be “the cream of the crop” when it comes to preparedness at the start of the audit. For Barron County, when the audit starts, we can actually breathe a little easier because we already have everything completed and uploaded at their fingertips. This saves them a

lot of time not having to chase documents down, and some days we hardly hear from them. Areas of focus included auditing various accounts in all Barron County funds, grant testing, fixed assets, payroll, treasurer’s cash and investments, to name a few.

Even though CLA’s fieldwork is completed, the audit finalization will continue in June, with CLA compiling our Financial Statements and preparing reports to be filed with the State and Federal Governments. Once the compilation of the data is completed, drafts of the Financial Statements will be sent to Barron County for our review. When our review is completed, reports will be filed and the final Financial Statements will be printed. The final deadline for completion and filing is July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Once the Financial Statements are released, they are sent to a variety of agencies and borrowers that service Barron Coun-

ty. These Statements affect grant funding, bond ratings, interest rates, and bonding. They are part of the reason we were able to keep our AA Bond Rating as we worked through the 2020 bonding for the new Highway Facility.

With the 2022 Budget season right around the corner, our focus will shift again. New budget spreadsheets will be created, and wage projections will be calculated and distributed to the departments with the budget worksheets the second week of July. Then it is full speed ahead to build a balanced budget over the summer, with final County Board approval in early November.

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## Maintenance / Parks & Recreation

### Mark Servi, Highway Commissioner

The Highway Department is currently undertaking construction and maintenance activities on our County System, the State Highway System and the local Town/City/Village Systems. We have a backlog of projects that will last us through the construction season.

On the County System, we are currently working on pavement replacement on CTH F from the Dunn County Line north to the north village limits in Prairie Farm. Work on the first stage of this project will be completed before July 4<sup>th</sup>, and the second phase will occur later in the summer. We are also placing the second mat of asphalt on the CTH U project (STH 25 to Village of Dallas) that was started last fall. Other county projects this season will include crack fill and chip seal of CTH AA (CTH SS to CTH A), CTH I (CTH A to Chetek), CTH SS (Rice Lake to Haugen) and CTH V (Haugen to Brill). These maintenance projects help extend the life of the pavement. Other work will include reconstruction of the CTH A / 18<sup>th</sup> Street intersection and replacement of a small bridge on CTH A in preparation of repaving of CTH A from Dallas to CTH I in 2022. The paving project is a federally funded project, and we have been advanced in the schedule from 2024 by DOT as they had funding come available and trust us to deliver this project on an advanced schedule. Our fall project will be repaving of CTH I from CTH A south to the county line. Maintenance activities such as mowing, patching and sign maintenance are also occurring.

The crew is also working on the Z-wall at the Waste to Energy plant. This is a collaborative effort between Highway and WTE – they brought us their concept and we are making it a reality. Department staff did the design and permitting needed and we are now constructing the wall. This is an extremely interesting project for all of us as it is the first time we have worked with the block retaining wall system. Picture 4-foot by 3-foot Legos. Once the wall is constructed we will perform the grading and other site work to allow WTE customers to safely unload into product specific bins. Ray and his crew have been anxiously awaiting this project and it will help them keep things organized and efficient.

We also have many projects booked with our locals (Towns, Cities and Villages). We appreciate the projects that the local entrust to us to perform and take pride in getting these projects completed in a quality conscious and cost effective manner. At this time we have larger projects scheduled with almost every local government unit as well as other Departments.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and skills of the entire staff of the Highway Department. I feel blessed being able to come to work each day with this crew, and we should all appreciate the efforts that they all put forth to make Barron County the great place to live it is.

We also have a building project going on.....

## Forestry

### John Cisek, County Forest Administrator

Timber Sale bid opening took place on May 28<sup>th</sup>. The sale areas are located on in the Towns of Bear Lk. (3) & Maple Plain (2). The sales contained the combined volumes:

160.00 MBF (thousand board feet) of Hardwood Sawtimber.  
561 cords of Mixed Hardwood cordwood.  
2310 cords of Aspen  
163 cords of oak cordwood.  
707 cords of Pine cordwood.

All five tracts sold. The Results are available on the County's website.

Harvesting is temporarily suspended due to wet ground conditions and/ or oak wilt restrictions.

## Corporation Counsel

### John Muench, Corporation Counsel

#### Contract and Memorandum of Understanding Approval Process.

The Technology Department recently upgraded the Contract Approval Process to add a button for requesting approval of Memorandums of Understanding. The approval process is now all electronic through Laserfiche, and provides an efficient method for submitting, approval by the various departments that need to provide input and approval, be it Administration, Finance, Technology or Legal, and for tracking requests. The system provides for a method of forwarding to the next step, tracking and ultimate storage of the completed contract or memorandum of understanding. The Contract and MOU Approval Process is easily accessible through Laserfiche Forms on the Intranet.

#### Requests for Legal Opinions.

If you are seeking a Legal Opinion on issues that affect your department please complete and submit the Legal Opinion Request Form with as much information as you have on the issue. Please provide a date by which you need a response. We are exploring creating an electronic version for making these requests much like the Contract Approval process on Laserfiche.

#### Public Records Law Requirements.

As a local governmental body, Barron County is covered by the Public Records Law, Section 19.31 – 19.39 Wisconsin Statutes. As such, each Records Custodian is required to provide a Public Notice regarding availability, method of access and cost of copies. The Department Heads are usually the Record Custodian for their department and the County Clerk is the Record Custodian for Committees and County Board. If you receive a Public Records Request, do not hesitate to contact the Corporation Counsel's Office as soon as possible for assistance and guidance.

When dealing with Public Records requests it is important to remember that a record is not simply a paper copy of a document in your office. "Record" means any material on which written, drawn, printed, spoken, visual or electromagnetic information or electronically generated or stored data is recorded or preserved, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that has been created or is being kept by an authority. "Record" includes, but is not limited to handwritten, typed or printed pages, maps, charts, photographs, films, recordings, tapes, optical discs, and any other medium on which electronically generated or stored data is recorded or preserved.

Given the broad definition of what is a record, it is easy to see that use of the County email system automatically creates a record which is subject to the Public Records Law, and the County email archive program preserves those emails for a period of seven years. Therefore, when you send an email, reply or forward an email you are creating a record. Recently, departments have received Public Records request for emails that cover a lengthy period of time and include multiple email accounts and search terms. Such requests result in the generation of a response of thousands of emails and the expenditure of time to review and determine if the release of any particular email is appropriate. Therefore, if you receive any Public Records request for emails, contact the Corporation Counsel's Office and the Technology Department as soon as possible for assistance in responding to the request.

## Health & Human Services

### Stacey Frolik, Director

It is hard to believe we are already half way through 2021. The Public Health Unit continues to concentrate on Covid related activities as well as re-focusing on other program areas including other Communicable Disease, Prenatal Care Coordination, and Reproductive Health.

Active cases of Covid 19 have slowed down over the past several weeks. According to the model put out by Harvard ( <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>) Barron County is in the Green Risk Level (on track for containment) which is less than 1 case per 100,00 people. Public Health is continuing to contact trace when notified of a positive case in the county. To date Barron County has had 5901 positive cases, 85 deaths related to Covid 19 and 19,803 persons in the county who have received at least one dose of the Covid 19 vaccine. Public Health does have vaccine on hand if you or someone you know is interested in becoming vaccinated.

The Environmental Health program has been heavily focused on inspections of campgrounds and tourist rooming houses as those are typically seasonally operated businesses. We have seen an increase in unlicensed tourist rooming houses in the Barron County area. Please follow the Barron County Public Health Facebook page for upcoming guidance regarding what is needed to become a licensed tourist rooming house or contact the Environmental Health Program directly for more information. There are currently 2 interns working with the Environmental Health Program area and they are primarily responsible for DNR water testing of transient wells in the county to ensure there are safe levels of bacteria and nitrates in these water supplies. They are also doing some work with the tourist rooming houses as well.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) continues to be able to provide services by phone under waivers granted by USDA. A return to in person visits is anticipated to start in late August. WIC has two exciting opportunities this summer that has helped to increase access to fruit and vegetables for WIC families. Currently as part of the American Rescue Plan families are receiving an increase in the cash value benefit for fruits and vegetables through the month of September. WIC participants are receiving \$35/person to spend on fruits and vegetables at the grocery store, which is up from the normal value of \$9/child and \$11/adult. In addition the farmer's market program has been expanded this year. The Farmer's Market Nutrition Program is an additional benefit offered to WIC participants in the summer months in which they receive checks to spend at local farmers' market and farm stands to purchase fresh locally grown produce. Normally families receive about \$30/family. This summer FMNP checks are being issued per person instead of family, increasing the amount of checks available to many of the WIC families.

Medicaid recipients who are currently receiving benefits will have continued eligibility through December 31, 2021 with no renewal requirements. Recipients of Foodshare are still receiving the maximum benefit through the end of June. It is unknown how long this expanded benefit will continue. The State informs counties of the continuation on a month by month basis. Energy and Heating Assistance did end in May for the 2020/2021 heating season. The program will start again this fall around October 1, 2021 for the next heating season.

We are partnering with Wahburn, Polk and potentially other neighboring counties to create a Loss Group for families of people who died of suicide. This group is in the planning stages. The group will provide education, resources, and support to families and friends of people who have died of suicide. The group will begin with a mental health professional leading and transition to a true support group format. We hope to have the group started by the end of this calendar year.

The Comprehensive Community Services program which focuses on recovery for people with AODA and mental health issues across a lifespan continues to expand. The program and services are fully funded by state and federal dollars. We are currently serving 39 adults and 55 youth.